

AMELIA MOLINA GARCÍA

PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING AND CULTURE FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: REFLECTIONS FOR ITS CREATION

Abstract

I would like to share some reflections concerning the results of several investigations in the field of training of values, citizenship, basic education (primary and secondary school), at national and international contexts. First, I shall present the context in which those researches took place, then I will go to some of the results and in my conclusion I will show the proposals for the construction of global citizenship.

Key words: reflective education, citizen competences, global citizenship, action capability, basic education

Introduction

Since several decades ago, education in values for democracy, citizenship and human rights has had a prevailing position in numerous countries, not only in Latin America, but also around the world; Mexico is not the exception. One of the privileged settings to develop those educational processes is the school environment in which various special learning programs have been carried out. The curricular content or explicit strategies have been added aiming to educate for democracy and/or for citizenship. In some other circumstances, they have been considered as working manners and transversal contents that appear in an implicit form in the school curricula (*cf.* ICCS, 2009). *We recognize the presence of philosophic-pedagogical perspectives in those training practices, in which civic, ethic, moral and social dimensional aspects can be distinguished, which aim to increase the ethical aspect* (Yurén, 1995) of the society in which it is practiced. In this sense, it can be observed that education for citizenship has not been foreign in our Mexican education (Latapí, 1999), but it certainly has had variations in the way it has been present or absent in the academic curricula. During many decades after the Mexican Revolution, civic education was explicitly taught in basic education; however, during the early years of the 70's of the 20th century, it was left implicit in the Social Sciences. Subsequently, the reappearance of Civic Education in the curricula and programs of Mexican basic education was an event that promoted a change of perspective at the end of the last century, "reacquiring" a moral status. It is first reincorporated in the secondary school curricula (SEP, 1993) and then in elementary school and preschool (SEP, 2011); meanwhile, different researchers (García-Salord & Vanella, 1992; Schmelkes, 1994, 1997 and 1998; Latapí, 1998; Molina, 2000; Luna, 2001; Yurén, 2004; Maggi *et al.*, 2003; Conde, 2004; Rodríguez, 2009; Rodríguez & Elizondo, 2010; among others) have carried out researches referring to educational processes, the meanings that the educational actors attribute them and the way of developing the training for a citizen civic education.

In my particular case, I have carried out several researches that deal with this thematic area at various educational levels and different scenes, which have led me

to some reflections: If school is a space socially recognized as a privileged setting for training citizens, how do the cultural constructs subvert such an education? In which manner could the pedagogical processes given at school settings contribute to the socio-cultural changes? When in school practices inconsistencies between saying and doing have been identified, what kind of citizens are we educating? And consequently, how could it be possible to develop competences for global citizenship, if the cultural contexts where they take place do not offer the conditions for their development?

For this reason I'm sharing some results of researches¹ carried out in different contexts: basic education – both primary and secondary school (Molina, 2000 and 2011), communitarian education, especially with CONAFE communitarian instructors (Molina, 2008); international and Mexican agencies (Molina, 2007), and some other experiences regarding the evaluation of text books for basic education and other materials with the same aim.

The paper is organized in three parts: the first one presents an overview of the aspects addressed in the researches; the second includes the analysis of the more recurrent results; and the third one offers some hints to generate actions which may contribute to the development of an active citizenship.

Investigative approaches as a process of building a citizenship notion

The first research, which actually was the one with which I got involved in this thematic area, focused on analyzing the way values for democracy are built up in sixth grade of primary school (Molina, 2000; Molina & Alonso, 2001). This was an ethnographic research done during a school year, which included groups of students from eight primary schools at the capital of Mexico and its metropolitan area. The research considered the socioeconomic dimension: the selected schools represented the social strata comprised in such an area. Interactions taking place at every moment during school hours were prioritized. It was also analyzed if there were differences in the teacher-students rapport established by teachers, taking into account the economic status between them and the learners. In terms of the pedagogical dimension, it was considered the kind of teacher training, the teaching practicing in classroom and the management of contents related to value education. At that moment, the notion of citizenship as a training process for primary school learners was not yet considered, but a question emerged with regards to the practice of values encouraged and if the education of subjects committed to their society was really taking place.

The results of the first research showed that the experiences and educational processes of the individuals tend to generate a climate for a responsible exercise of freedom and of free decisions. Therefore, taking into consideration my thirteen years of experience in communitarian service, I decided to investigate as part of my doctoral thesis, the indicators and the processes that determine the political culture of the CONAFE communitarian instructors (Molina, 2008). This was the second study regarding the citizen-training subject. The research had two aspects: a qualitative perspective and a quantitative one. Regarding the first aspect, life

¹ Due to space considerations, we will not make constant allusion to the researches carried out by the author of the article, these appear in the references.

experiences (stories) were reconstructed and analyzed considering contextual references. With reference to the quantitative data, besides contextualizing the stories of the communitarian instructors, *constellations of political culture* were set up, including the training tracks of the young participants in the programs.

Considering the above and due to the fact that I was invited to determine the status of Mexico at the beginning of the test on educational achievement concerning civic citizenship competences (IEA/ICCS, 2007 and 2008; Molina, 2007), I became interested in doing a research concerning the educational processes that took place in secondary schools to create citizenship competences (Molina, 2011). This research is focused on determining if the training practice performed by teachers in their classroom in secondary schools generates citizenship competences and if the civic and ethic competences proposed in the syllabi and programs of secondary school (SEP, 2007) are encouraged or not by teachers.

Main results: characteristics of the educational processes in school settings

Results from the three researches mentioned in the last section are presented. I have no intention to be reductionist but due to the reduced space, I shall only present the data that coincides, especially in relation to basic education. Based on those results, we were able to prove that the kind of educational services offered in the different economic strata is not the same. Some differences were present regarding the participation of parents at school because in popular areas parents' participation is more controlled by the school due to the fact that they cannot enter the school premises so easily.

Both in primary and in secondary school, there are various contradicting situations and processes in the formation of values which should characterize the "democratic" practices of the young citizens (learners). According to our analytic perspective, such practice should promote the developing of moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1992, 1997) and *agency capacity* (Yurén & Mick, 2013) in the students in training. These practices are far from achieving it, since the rapport established by some teachers offer, as a common practice, an *authoritarian-vertical directionality*, in which the perceptions of the learners are not important; furthermore, they take for granted that "the students are the ones who should be educated", even though teachers violate educational precepts.

Another distinctive feature in the teaching practice is that normally there is no congruence or a systematic function between the expressed values for democracy and their practice. A teacher can be talking about participation or respect, but the learner neither participates nor his rights are respected. Very seldom students have an opportunity to participate in the decisions being taken, since the teachers are the ones who determine what to do and how to do it. Therefore, the educational process goes backwards because the learner cannot conclude the educational process as a product of his own decisions. On the other hand, we can point out that where the routine work is most important and the student knows in advance what will happen, the possibilities of creating environments to reflect on or build their own knowledge is reduced; even the suitable activities to foster democratic practices and social compromise are left behind. Thus, it is required as a practice (not frequent in the observation), that teachers develop a systematic exercise, conscientious and

consistent, where every activity or promise is fulfilled. The deliberate action and thus, a reflective one, make the difference between a convinced attitude (including everything it implies) and the mechanical fulfillment of school chores (regarding contents).

In this sense, another aspect that strongly drew our attention in our research was the use of the time assigned to the civic and ethic training, where we could confirm the effective use of only the third part of the time intended for such task. The teacher or the school in general, frequently has “another more important thing” to work on, rather than working with the contents and activities designed for such training. As a result, little commitment is internalized, and after they graduate, youngsters express it is a subject in which almost anything can be included, but they cannot recall anything specific about civic or ethic aspects.

So it would be naive to think the school is the only responsible for civic-citizen training, since we have also observed in our third research (Molina, 2008)², that the training spaces being generated as part of the social environment, in which it is required to do daily activities that involve looking up information, the use of it according to the contexts and the person addressed, the reflection regarding the type of practice to develop and the analysis of the possible effects they might have, offer a wide educational spectrum from a critic-reflexive approach, for children and youth, in whom a high sense of social culture and a commitment to the environment they live in.

Teenagers and youth participating in those experiences, acquire a distinctive feature: awareness; they become more responsible and committed, not only with the activities they perform, but also with their social environment, and the pursuit of better living conditions for the most vulnerable groups of the country.

Conclusions and reflections for global citizenship

From the previous results and the review of others researches (mentioned at the beginning of the article), as well as some theoretical references (Sen, 2000; Bauman, 2002; Giroux, 2006; Popkewitz, 2009) concerning those processes, we may conclude that it is necessary to generate actions which make possible the transformation of the teaching practices, not in isolation but designed in a systematic manner and with a specific purpose: to train the youth to decide and act responsibly, to accept the consequences derived from the educational processes and also to express his opinion.

It implies educating a person to act freely, free to choose and design his own path in the formal or informal educational field; this implies his autonomy to decide, to take care of himself and to be aware of the collective well-being.

Finally³, we keep in mind that the school still constitutes a device rich of positive educational intentions, where it is possible to carry out educational actions

² Another vein that arose the interest in this thematic area, was the fact that I worked for more than ten years in the National Council for Educational Development (CONAFE), where after several years, and as part of my doctoral education, I was able to carry out the research called *Indicadores y procesos en la conformación de la cultura política juvenil* (Molina 2004, 2008 and 2012; Molina y Ponce, 2011).

³ It is important to mention that many of these conclusions are expressed in Molina, 2013.

to regulate the process of change towards the formation of global citizenship. Therefore, it is necessary to build a notion of citizenship that springs from its socio-historic-cultural dimension, with the purpose of transforming the procedures culturally acquired in the teaching practice. To look for, like an essential component: to be able to take free decisions, search for his welfare and the possibility to create individuals socially conscious and educated.

A democratic citizenship demands a critical posture to achieve the emancipation of individuals who can act capably and will not accept the *election codes* determined by the international macro-organisms. This implies working on the tensions generated by the inclusion/exclusion, in which the discourse encourages the individual to generate processes of change; yet, in practice he is left behind, by presenting to him arbitrary or unilateral decisions.

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Prof. Dr. Amelia Molina García
 Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo
 Mexico
 meluxmolina06@hotmail.com